DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 158 635 HE 010 300

AUTHOR Nelson, Susan Lee; Ittelson, John
TITLE Raising Teaching Consciousness With a Video Stimulated Discussion.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 7p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Behavior Change; *Classroom Observation Techniques; Classroom Techniques; Faculty Development; Higher Education; Instructional Media; *Interaction Process Analysis; *Microteaching; Observation; Student Behavior; *Student Teacher Relationship; Teacher Behavior; Teacher Improvement; *Teaching Techniques; *Video Tape Recordings
IDENTIFIERS *College Classroom Vignettes; Northwestern University IL

ABSTRACT

College Classroom Vignettes, a videotape technique used to motivate teachers to change classroom behavior, is discussed. This new application of videotape was undertaken at Northwestern University's Center for the Teaching Professions with funding from the Danforth Foundation. College Classroom Vignettes are videotape records of actual classroom events rather than staged behavior. Tapes were viewed and common occurrences were compiled and matched after which segments were selected and edited. Vignettes were viewed in five- to eight-minute segments alternated with reaction and analysis by viewers. Discussions focused mostly on context; viewers evaluated their views on student teacher interactions in response to concrete examples on tape. Questionnaires were administered to viewers to gather responses to the vignette process. The dissemination phase of the project, funded by the Kellogg Foundation, publicizes the tapes and accompanying written materials and offers training in the skills needed for their effective use. The production of new vignettes through collaboration between vignette staff and faculty at other institutions is also sponsored. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Susan Nelson
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

- ED158635

Raising Teaching Consciousness with a Video Stimulated Discussion

Susan Lee Nelson

and

John Ittelson

Can videotape be used to motivate teachers to change their classroom behavior? How are College Classroom Vignettes different from other videotape programs now in use?

This article will attempt to answer these questions as it examines the need that existed in higher education for new methods that improve the teacher-learner process. It describes the way that this need is being met by College Classroom Vignettes.

With the development of micro-teaching, it was demonstrated that technology could make an effective contribution to the professional growth of teachers in terms of their teaching skills. This system, however, did not reach the other groups who could benefit from the convenient use of videotape, namely groups doing faculty development activities and future college teachers.

The unique advantages of videotape use were known, such as: highlighting specific teaching behaviors by isolating and recording them, and preventing the memory lag that often occurs when a group attempts to discuss what they observed in the classroom. The application, however, needed to be taken a step further: video playback of live classroom behavior used to stimulate discussion. This may lead to further introspection, to analysis of teaching theory, and perhaps to actual personal taping.

Videotape and Teaching

Micro-teaching demonstrated a significant contribution of videotaping as a

HE 010 300

way to improve teacher effectiveness. As this application of media was explored, several approaches and formats were developed, each with distinct objectives and goals for the viewers as well as for those being taped.

One of the approaches involved producing "how-to" tapes. These tapes demonstrated and instructed specific teaching techniques. They tried to apply the same formula used by other media programs to the crucial issue of improving teacher effectiveness. They were often step by step presentations with a cold or clinical manner.

But a recipe or model for teachers to copy was not well received. The "do-it-like-this" tapes were usually contrived and unnatural, with a cast performing a script which was often long and tedious. It is not surprising that teachers had difficulty identifying with the 'ideal' behavior shown on the tapes.

College Classroom Vignettes

The problem of effective use of videotape for identification and examination of key issues in education was addressed at Northwestern University's Center for the Teaching Professions. With funding from the Danforth Foundation, a new application of videotape was undertaken.

College Classroom Vignettes are videotape records of actual classroom events. They are not staged for taping but rather show live classroom behavior. The result is a device that stimulates discussion among college faculty and future teachers.

The project went into the taping phase without preconceptions about the kind of activities that would be recorded. No judgment was made about "good" or "bad" teaching styles. It was a data bank of videotape that looked for common occurrences in teaching.

All the tapes were viewed and the common occurrences were compiled and matched. Segments of the tapes were selected and edited from the classrooms participating in the project.

The success of the vignettes lies in the comfortable format of the tapes themselves and the way in which they produce a thoughtful examination of the issues through discussion. The vignette experience does not involve sitting and watching for lengthy periods. The tape is stopped at various intervals to encourage interaction among viewers.

More about the tapes and taping . . .

A typical vignette includes an interview with the professor. As in Vignette I, the professor shares his goals and objectives for the class. The next scene occurs in the classroom itself. Students are discussing a book they have been reading. There is a great deal of interaction in the class. The students are animated and lively as they disagree over various points. The camera picks up these exchanges and interactions and also focuses on the professor's role in the discussion.

In the last segment of the vignette, the students and professor discuss their reactions to the class. They talk openly about what they were thinking and feeling at various stages of the class.

The technicians and equipment remained fairly unobtrusive. The class functioned normally because of a carefully constructed process of exposure to technicians and equipment. The technicians began by observing the class for noise interruptions, light sources, and generally becoming familiar with the people and surrounding for the taping. Practice taping sessions were done to evaluate the technical quality of tapes produced in that environment. By the time of the final taping, there was a comfortable atmosphere without fear of cameras and mikes. What is shown on the tape is real behavior as it occurred naturally.

The Discussion Process

One of the unique aspects of the Vignettes Program is the interaction that

is produced by the discussion of issues observed in the tapes. Vignettes are viewed in 5 to 8 minute segments. After each segment, the tape is stopped so that viewers may react and analyze what they have seen. These discussions are the involving part of the process.

Discussions are not limited to subject content, but focus mostly on context. The tapes have universal appeal and impact as they show real teachers in the classroom. Vignettes do not attempt to portray the correct model for teaching, nor do they lecture or "talk at you" about teaching. The tapes help viewers evaluate their own perceptions and attitudes about student and teacher interactions in response to the concrete examples shown on the tape.

The discussion leader plays an important role in the effective use of vignettes. It is essential that the tape be viewed in advance of a discussion session. The written materials (transcript of the tape dialogue, course description, end of term questionnaire, end of class questionnaire, discussion leaders' guide, and a list of references for further reading) help identify some of the issues or topics for consideration. After the group has seen a segment, the leader asks open ended questions. The group begins to interact relating their own perceptions about teaching to what they have seen on the tape. Again, there are no absolutes or correct answers to be found, but a free exchange of ideas relating to a common reference. Vignettes are evocative rather than didactic.

A questionnaire evaluated the viewers' responses to the vignette process. Workshop participants were asked such questions as: "During the tape, what proportion of the time were you attentive?" and "List, if you can, any ways in which you have changed as a result of this session."

At typical sessions there was a reported 90% level of attentiveness while viewing a vignette and during discussion.

The qualitative effects of the tapes can be demonstrated by a sample of reactions to the questionnaire that was given at the end of a vignette workshop conducted by Dr. Robert J. Menges for the American Political Science Association in 1976. Among comments by the participants about how the session affected them were the following:

"Greater awareness of problems and possibilities of discussions."

"I have lacked (and do lack) a solid background in how to teach."

"This has given me much to think about."

"Reinforced previous opinions, that what's 'effective' is presently inconclusive as applied to college teaching."

"Perhaps I'll talk more with my students about my teaching methods."

"Made me more aware of the need to think through goals of what should go on in the classroom, balanced between substantive knowledge and participation levels, etc."

"This tape discussion is a valuable reference against which I can contrast my own techniques of conducting classroom discussion."

"I plan periodic verbal course evaluation discussions."

"I am going to work toward creating some 'breaks' to enable students to think (during discussions)."

"More explicit identification of my goals in leading discussions, attempt to integrate discussion sections with other course activities."

"Would like to try to encourage more adversary relationships (student to student, and student to teacher) in order to get away from so much lecturing, also use more open ended questions."

Dissemination

The current dissemination phase of the project, funded by the Kellogg Foundation, has two goals. The first publicizes the tapes and accompanying written materials and also offers training in the skills needed for their effective use.

The second goal is concerned with the production of new vignettes through collaboration between vignette staff and faculty at other institutions.

In conclusion, it has been demonstrated that videotape can motivate teachers to discuss key issues in education related to classroom events depicted in vignettes. Videotape makes a unique contribution by recording live classroom activities that are preserved on tape for leisurely examination and discussion. The resulting discussion sessions have been characteristically enthusiastic and productive with an open sharing of viewpoints and perspectives.